

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A12NEW YORK TIMES
11 December 1985

Chinese in U.S.: Question of Loyalties

By FOX BUTTERFIELD

Special to The New York Times

Several years ago a Chinese-American working for Union Carbide in Peking was approached by a senior Chinese official with a proposal.

He reminded her of a common loyalty to China, then suggested that if she would get him some confidential information on her company's costs for a proposed chemical project, he would introduce her to other well-placed bureaucrats who could help her work and advance her career.

The woman rejected the offer. But the incident reflects the complex web of pressures that affect some Chinese-Americans in their dealings with China.

Last month Larry Wu-Tai Chin, a former analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency, was arrested on charges of spying for China in a case that has Federal investigators and some of Mr. Chin's friends wondering what might have motivated him if he was indeed a double agent, a charge he denies.

Deeply Sensitive Question

Money and Communist indoctrination figure in the speculation, but some diplomats, business executives and scholars suggest that deep-seated loyalty to his Chinese homeland could be an important factor in the case.

The issue of whether Chinese-Americans face a problem of divided loyalty is a deeply sensitive one.

Woo Chia-wei, the head of the National Association of Chinese-Americans, says it is "totally unfair" to suggest that Chinese-Americans are not patriotic to the United States.

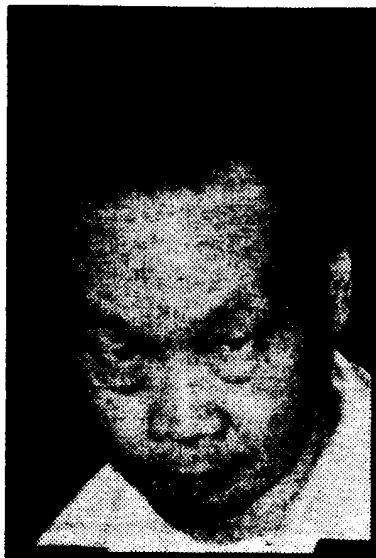
"It's like the attitude toward Japanese-Americans in World War II," said Mr. Woo, who is president of San Francisco State University. "I've been to China many times, and I've never sensed any kind of pressure other than that they wanted me to be an American friendly to them. I've always sensed there is a clear line drawn, that China wants overseas Chinese to remain, as Zhou Enlai put it, like married daughters."

But some Americans who have worked in China contend that Chinese-Americans face a special problem.

Threats About Families

"Chinese-Americans are often under tremendous pressure by the Government in China, and Taiwan too," said Lucian Pye, a political scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who has written extensively about the cultural aspects of Chinese politics. "They can play on Chinese-Americans' pride in China and make threats about their family members still in China. It's a dimension other Americans don't appreciate."

Scholars have long observed that nationalism is an especially potent force



United Press International

Larry Wu-Tai Chin

among Chinese. China has been not just a country but an amalgam of people, territory, language, history and civilization more like a religion than a nation-state.

Nevertheless, according to several current and former State Department officials, the 63-year-old Mr. Chin is the first Chinese-American they can recall who has been being arrested as an agent for China.

In part, said one, that is because comparatively few Chinese-Americans have joined the Foreign Service or the military. "It isn't where they get mobility," he suggested. "They go into business or science instead."

Scientists Returned to China

In addition, said Charles Cross, a retired Foreign Service officer who served as American Consul General in Hong Kong, the few ethnic Chinese in the State Department were usually not permitted to work on Chinese affairs until the 1970's because of lingering anti-Communist sentiment dating to the era of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy.

At the height of Senator McCarthy's accusations about Communists in Washington in the early 1950's, a number of Chinese-American scientists were investigated and eventually returned to China.

The most famous case was that of Qian Xuesen, a professor at the California Institute of Technology, a pioneer in American rocket research in World War II. In 1950, on the suspicion that he had briefly been a member of the Communist Party in 1938, the Government seized Mr. Qian's scientific papers, put his house under surveillance and sub-

jected him to a series of hearings. Disillusioned by his treatment, Mr. Qian eventually returned to China where he helped develop Peking's own nuclear missile program, along with a number of scientists and engineers trained in the United States.

The American Consulate General in Hong Kong, for many years the center of American China-watching, has employed Chinese as translators and analysts, Mr. Cross said. "But they were not allowed into anything that could matter," he said. "They were assumed to be under pressure just because they had relatives in China."

It is not clear how Mr. Chin escaped such suspicion.

Chin's Long U.S. Career

The Federal Bureau of Investigation says that after Mr. Chin attended Yenching University in Peking he was employed by the United States Army in Fuzhou as an interpreter in World War II, later moving to the American consulate in Shanghai and then in 1949 to the Consulate in Hong Kong.

Federal agents say that later, after joining the C.I.A. through its Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Mr. Chin handled a number of top-secret reports and made several trips to Toronto and Hong Kong to turn over material to the Chinese.

The F.B.I. account of Mr. Chin's activities has puzzled some Chinese-Americans. "It strikes me as very strange," said Wang Lingchi, a professor of Asian-American studies at the University of California at Berkeley.

"You have to remember that for most of the past 35 years the C.I.A. had very close contact with KMT agents from Taiwan," Mr. Wang contended, referring to the Kuomintang or Nationalist Party. "I'm certain that Chin was some sort of liaison with the KMT, and Taiwan has fingered him now to embarrass relations between the United States and China."

Mr. Wang said he personally was never pressured by China, although he was born there and grew up in Hong Kong. "But I have friends with the opposite experience," he added.

Two of his Chinese-American acquaintances who travel to China have been detained by the F.B.I., one held in a hotel room in Oakland for a week, in an effort to recruit them to spy for the United States, Mr. Wang asserted.

Mr. Woo, the president of San Francisco State University, said that "even the sentimental connection" to China has weakened in recent years among younger Chinese-Americans, few of whom now speak Chinese and most of whom are largely interested in their careers. "No more than 1 or 2 percent of Chinese-Americans are involved with China now," he said, "and mostly for doing business."